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Labor's enemy: anti-semitism

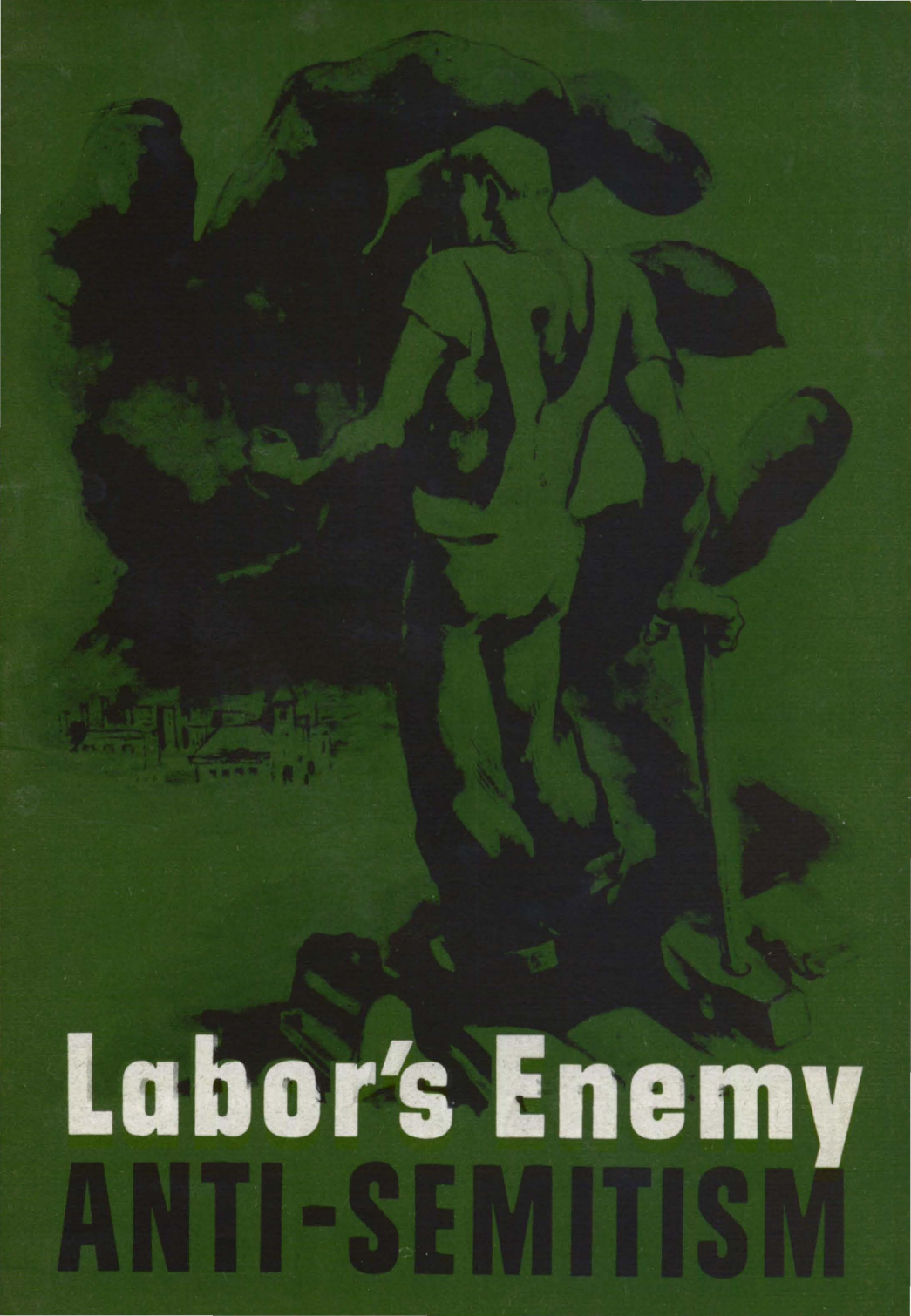
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Labor's Enemy

ANTI-SEMITISM

***This is a message of importance, addressed to the
workingmen of America.***

***It is addressed to them as members of trade unions
and as citizens of the community.***

***Its subject matter is racial and religious bigotry. It
is concerned with the evil effects of racial and religious
conflict upon the unions, and also upon that larger demo-
cratic society which must exist if unions are to remain
strong and free.***

***This pamphlet was written by CHARLES B. SHERMAN, director of Labor
Relations of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and illustrated
by XAVIER GONZALES***

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THE FIGHT GOES ON

The military struggle against the armies of Hitler, in which organized labor played such a magnificent role, has brought to American union members increased awareness and understanding of the uses to which evil and unscrupulous men have put racial and religious hatred. They have learned that the Nazis, basing their ideology on a depraved "master race" theory, were able to seize power in Germany — power they used to crush unions — and were almost able to conquer the world.

American workingmen have seen what the Nazis tried to do, and they have seen the freedom-loving people of the world rise up and crush the German armies. Organized labor felt — and rightly so — that the war was not only a military struggle against German and Japanese imperialism, but also a struggle against the whole Nazi theory of race "superiority." It was a war for a free and democratic world, which cannot exist except on the basis of equality for men of all races and religions.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that racial and religious hatred began with Hitler, or that it was destroyed when Hitler's armies were crushed. Hitler used bigotry as a political weapon, perhaps more effectively than anyone else in history; but he did not invent it, nor did it die with him. It might be used, with almost equally devastating results, against the free labor movement and free democratic institutions of the United States.

That is why organized labor must take, and is taking, an ever greater part in the struggle against those who would infuse the venom of racial and religious bigotry into America's bloodstream.

WHAT IS BIGOTRY?

Bigotry has many forms, but the central theme in each is the "inferiority" of some racial or religious group. Bigotry may be social or cultural, but its most common and dangerous form is economic.

Economic discrimination has been, and is, practiced against foreign-born Americans, religious minorities, Negroes and in a different sense, against women as a group.

It is of utmost importance to understand that the fight against bigotry is indivisible.

Unless the interests of every minority group are safeguarded, no minority group is safe. You cannot effectively fight anti-Semitism without fighting Jim Crow. You cannot demonstrate indignation against treatment of foreign born and be unmoved by discrimination against native American Catholics. He who closes his eyes to maltreatment of Mexicans, Indians, Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese, and other orientals in our own country, cannot successfully combat injustices committed against religious minorities here and in other lands. Members of unions built on the principles of unity and equality, will understand that no man can be free while a single man remains a slave. Discrimination and prejudice are not merely problems of Jews, or Negroes, or Catholics, or Mexicans, but the concern of the whole nation and of every citizen in it.

JEW BAITERS AT WORK

A particularly pernicious form of bigotry is anti-Semitism. It is a terrifying social disease. When once it has infected a nation, or the rulers of a nation, it drags that nation and its people to the very depths of degrada-

tion. The last 12 years have given us the perfect illustration of the effects of the disease in its most virulent form. Buchenwald, Dachau, Maidanek, Tremblinka—the names of these Nazi slaughterhouses—will remain a stench in the nostrils of mankind forever, the classic example of the ultimate in moral and spiritual degeneration.

But the last 12 years do not provide the only illustration of the use of anti-Semitism as a weapon of oppression.

For nearly two thousand years there has been no barometer more accurate in registering the social climate of a country than the treatment accorded the Jews. Jews have always been oppressed and persecuted in times of reaction. In times of progress they have been treated as human beings. No country has ever been able to set itself up as a stable democratic state when it held its Jews in subjection. No country has been able to retain its democracy once it has robbed its Jewish citizens of their political and civil rights. *Despots have always used anti-Semitism to preserve their despotism.* In those countries which have achieved an advanced democracy, anti-Semitism has historically served as the opening wedge for counter-revolution.

The disease of anti-Semitism is not a German disease. No country, no nation, no class, no single group has so far proved to be completely immune to it. It cuts across all geographic boundaries and economic lines.

The pattern is clear and follows a straight line. The persecution of Jews is the forerunner of general persecution, which proceeds until not a single group remains free.

Look at the history of Europe in the last two centuries. The French Revolution brought an era of political democ-

racy to all of Western Europe. The principle that Jews are entitled to full citizenship was accepted, and they became an integral part of the economic, cultural and political life of the Western European countries. In Eastern Europe, however, which remained rooted in its feudal economic, social and political order, the Jews remained persecuted outcasts. This was especially true in Czarist Russia within whose pre-1917 boundaries more than half of the Jews in the world lived.

The overthrow of the Czar in Russia and the peace settlement at the end of World War I brought independence and a measure of political freedom to many of the formerly backward countries; and a change for the better in the conditions of the Jews followed almost automatically. But the reactionary groups still schemed for a return to "the good old days" when the common man had no voice, when the peasants were chained to their plows and the workers mercilessly exploited. Not strong enough to make a direct attack on the institutions of freedom, *the reactionaries seized upon the device of anti-Semitism to divert the attention of the masses and prepare the way for the overthrow of democracy.* Many people lent a credulous ear to their propaganda; others remained indifferent in the face of it, not realizing that Jew-baiting was eating away at the vitals of the democracy which they really wanted to preserve and extend.

Some of the states which gained their independence as a result of the First World War resisted the attacks of the reactionaries. Such a one was Czechoslovakia, which treated all her citizens—including Jews—as equals, and as a result was able to retain her position as an

advanced democratic state up to the very moment she was invaded by the Nazis. By contrast, the new Poland quickly embarked on a program of discrimination against her Jewish citizens. Soon other minorities were being persecuted, and before long the masses of the Poles themselves had lost their civil and political rights. Poland gradually deteriorated into a semi-Fascist state, a ripe plum for Hitler's picking.

The fact that so many people, with so much bitter experience, are still not fully aware of the danger inherent in anti-Semitism is a tragic misfortune of our age.

THE WEAPON OF REACTION

Reaction means the efforts of small groups to serve their own predatory interests by denying the great mass of people political and economic democracy.

Reaction can succeed only when these groups can blind the people to the real causes of social maladjustment — the real “What’s wrong with the world.”

“It’s the Jews,” Reaction cries. “What’s wrong with the world is the Jews.”

This propaganda is most effective in times of economic dislocation or political unrest when tension is high and angry and worried people need an outlet for pent-up emotions. Reaction gives them a scapegoat: the Jews.

By getting the masses to blame all their troubles on the Jews, Reaction achieves a double goal:

The discontent of the masses is channeled into a “safe” movement — safe, that is, for Reaction.

The masses are divided into conflicting blocs — blocs which spend their energies fighting each other on a false

issue. They are thus rendered impotent for the fight against Reaction on the real issues.

Trade unions are inherently the champions of democracy and the enemies of Reaction.

Therefore Reaction uses anti-Semitism against organized labor particularly.

In backward countries, the Jew is depicted as a foreign troublemaker, bent upon creating dissension between benevolent employer and contented employee by preaching alien dogma. That alien dogma includes, in this type of propaganda, the whole concept of unionism. Unions become a device invented by Jews, a stepping stone on the road of Jewish radicalism to world domination.

In more modern countries, the propaganda technique of anti-Semitism must be changed. The union movement is too strong to be attacked frontally; it must be out-flanked. Anti-Semitism is therefore used to create hostility toward unions in the community at large, and at the same time to weaken the unions from within by spreading the poison of mistrust and dissension.

A MEANS TO AN END

To understand how Reaction uses anti-Semitism, one must know the peculiarities which make it a unique social phenomenon. It is one of the oldest forms of race prejudice and religious bigotry; at the same time it is different from any other form. Why?

What are its unique features?

Persecution of the Jew is a means to an end. His destruction is a necessary step toward other and wider goals — the attack on democracy itself. Jew-baiting is a device to confuse the people and distract their attention.

Anti-Semitism is an *international disease*. Other forms of bigotry are confined to certain countries or regions; Jew-baiting knows no territorial limits. It was this characteristic which permitted Hitler to use it so cleverly in his scheme for world conquest. Hitler knew exactly what he was doing. He told Hermann Rauschning:

“My Jews are a valuable hostage given to me by the democracies. Anti-Semitic propaganda in all countries is an indispensable medium for the extension of our political campaign. You will see how little time we shall need in order to upset the ideas of the whole world simply and purely by attacking Judaism.”



Anti-Semitism does not grow out of actual experience. Where Jews and non-Jews work together, misconceptions are dispelled and prejudice largely disappears. The absence of prejudice in many large labor organizations with mixed Jewish and non-Jewish membership is eloquent testimony to that fact.

Anti-Semitism is the one form of group hatred shared by the unenlightened people of all races and creeds. It is the common ground upon which all reactionary and pro-fascists groups meet. It is the cement which unites the aristocratic Southern gentleman, General George Van Horn Moseley, with the rabble of the Christian Front in Brooklyn; Father Coughlin with the anti-Catholic Ku Klux Klan; the Mississippi Negro-baiter, Congressman John Rankin, a Democrat, with the Montana union-hater, ex-Congressman Dr. Torkelson, a Republican. *Precisely because it is the one thing all pro-fascists can get together on, anti-Semitism is the spearhead of fascism.* .

MINORITIES UNDER ATTACK

“We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights . . .”

Those few words, written into the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson, distill the essence of democracy. No state, not even society itself, has the right to deprive any individual — be he white or black, Jew or Gentile, Protestant or Catholic — of certain basic rights which are his by virtue of his membership in humanity.

But the history of America has been, it is sad to say, disfigured by repeated attempts on the part of anti-demo-

cratic elements to deprive minority groups of their inalienable rights. *Always it is the most defenseless minority which Reaction seeks to use as a scapegoat.*

Negroes have been the classic minority in the United States, but many other groups have come in for a share of prejudice and discrimination.

There was a time when Quakers were the butt of slander and abuse. In the 19th century, Catholics, then a weak minority, became scapegoats. The most widespread hate movements of the 19th century — the American Protective Association and the “Know-Nothings,” and the most vicious bigotry of the first quarter of the 20th century — the revived Ku Klux Klan — were directed primarily against Catholics. Convents, churches and parochial schools were burned. Anti-Catholic literature flooded the country — literature no different, essentially, from the anti-Semitic literature of today’s Coughlinites.

It is significant that anti-Catholicism became a political movement, as anti-Semitism is becoming in our time. The industrial barons used anti-Catholic prejudice, which they carefully fanned to prevent labor organization, just as they use anti-Semitism against labor today.

Almost since the beginnings of modern America, immigrants have provided a convenient minority for attack. In 1727 — a scant hundred years after the first white men came to America — a law was passed in Pennsylvania to control immigration, on the ground that immigrants were “ignorant of the language” and constituted “as it were, a separate people.” In 1798 the hue and cry against aliens led to passage of a law empowering the president to deport all aliens whom he regarded as dangerous to the country.

As the sources of immigration changed, the attacks changed. At the beginning of the 19th century, immigrants from England and Northern Europe were the targets of the alien baiters. Later the Irish superseded them, and for a long period were in the position, as Professor Lawrence G. Brown has put it, of "an extraneous group, to which politicians, laymen, in fact everyone, could turn for an explanation of all evils and all disturbing situations." Still later, immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe became the objects of unthinking prejudice.

The open shop industrialists overlooked no opportunity to turn alien-baiting to their own selfish ends. On the one hand they branded unionism a "foreign importation." On the other, they incited one immigrant group against another and native Americans against all immigrants. Some manufacturers even opposed teaching the English language to new Americans, for fear it would bring them closer to native-born workers, and both groups would discover that their interests were the same.

The reactionary industrialists failed in their plans. Immigrants made common cause with their native American fellow-workers, and proceeded to organize into unions. The labor movement became a living refutation of the fallacy that racial conflicts stem from biological factors and showed the immense good which can be accomplished when all racial and religious groups work together toward the one ideal of a happy nation and a just world.

Why, in unions, do white people work in harmony alongside colored people, Jews beside Gentiles, Mexicans with Chinese, French-Canadians with Germans? Because they



have learned that they must cooperate to maintain their organizations and their standard of living.

The enemies of organized labor know that too. That is why they so desperately try to pit creed against creed, color against color, race against race.

THE NAZI PLOT AGAINST AMERICA

At the end
of World

War I, Jews became the main object of attack by anti-minority groups in the United States. From 1933 until V-E Day anti-Semitism in this country was augmented, stimulated, organized and directed by the government of the Third Reich.

The importance the Nazis attached to anti-Semitism as a weapon of disunity can be measured by the hundreds of millions of dollars they spent on anti-Semitic propaganda outside Germany.

A special department of Goebbels' Propaganda Bureau busied itself with stirring up anti-Jewish feeling on a world scale. The bi-weekly publication, "World Service," printed in eight languages in Erfurt, Germany, became the bible of anti-Semites in this country. It printed a special edition to "uncover" the "dangerous and subversive activities of American Jewry." A constant stream of Nazi philosophy and gold flowed from Berlin to the Fifth Column in this country. It followed the German spies and propaganda agents, sent here to carry out the American part of Hitler's master plan for world conquest. He described that plan to Rauschning: "America is permanently on the brink of revolution. It will be a simple matter for me to produce the unrest and revolts in the United States."

And Goebbels added: "Nothing will be easier than to produce a bloody revolution in North America. . . . No other country has so many social and racial tensions."

As it turned out, Hitler and Goebbels were over-optimistic. They did not understand the sound common sense of most Americans and their inbred tolerance. But in other countries anti-Semitic propaganda bewildered the befuddled masses. It disarmed whole nations, spiritually and politically. It undermined appreciation of moral values, fanned primitive passions, sapped resistance.

The technique employed by anti-Semitic leaders is the opposite of logic and rationality. It seeks to arouse the beast in man. It strives to create a public mood in which

all that is humane, kind and charitable is sneered at. It thrives upon ignorance and backwardness. And it offers all things to all men.

To the victims of social or economic maladjustment, anti-Semitism holds out the false hope of a glorious future. To the frustrated, it brings delusions of grandeur. In the same breath Jews are damned as international bankers and cursed as communists. To the farmer, the Jew is painted as the embodiment of everything evil in city life. To city people, the Jew is depicted as an intruder and despoiler. *Anti-Semitism has only one consistency: it always rides the crest of reactionary waves.*

The techniques of spreading the poison of anti-Semitism have been carefully worked out and tested in action. Real and imaginary grievances are played up; false issues are raised; minor irritations are exaggerated. The people are worked up to a frenzy, until finally they reach a state of hysteria. Their power of reasoning is destroyed; they are no longer able to analyze arguments and evaluate events; they fail to see that the charges against Jews are so contradictory as to cancel each other out.

The next step is to undermine the confidence of the individual in himself and in his fellow men. The person who begins to believe what he hears from the anti-Semites sees himself in the midst of ruins, surrounded by enemies bent upon his annihilation. He can see no way out. His self-reliance is broken. He is helpless, desperate. He wants to be relieved of the painful task of thinking for himself. He is ready — indeed, he is eager — to seek salvation from a leader, a Fuehrer. He becomes clay in the hands of some demagogue, some political charlatan.

That is the recent history of the German people. It must not become the history of the American people.

A BIG ENOUGH LIE

There is nothing mysterious about the Jewish people. Like all who make up the warp and woof of America, they came here seeking to live in peace. None could be more devoted than they to the American way, for no group was more oppressed in the Old World.

In Europe, they were ostracized socially and excommunicated politically, discriminated against economically and persecuted in the practice of their religion. They were exiled, pogromized, tortured mentally, butchered physically. Every evil thing that was done to them became an excuse for some new evil. They were forced into ghettos and then accused of being clannish. They were driven off the land and then blamed for concentrating in the cities. They were barred from the crafts and professions and then abused for trying to enter trade. They were kept out of non-Jewish organizations and then accused of sinister motives when they formed organizations of their own.

From all this the Jews learned one great lesson: They had nothing to expect from reaction but misery and humiliation; their only hope for a decent life was bound up with the principles of freedom and progress. They brought with them to America a burning loyalty to those principles.

Yet they are still slandered and abused. If a lie is big enough and repeated often enough, said Hitler, it will be believed. It is well to examine some of the biggest and most-repeated lies about the Jews:

It is said that they have too much economic power.

The myth of Jewish financial control has been exploded over and over again. Numerous objective studies, carried out by responsible agencies, have exposed the groundlessness of the charge. As a matter of fact, they could not have seized financial control, if they had wanted to. When they began coming here in appreciable numbers, the trustification of the American economy was in full swing. The concentration of capital in the hands of a limited number of industrial and commercial magnates was well under way. Among them was hardly a Jewish name. Jewish businessmen, mostly in small and middle trade, fared no better than others in competition with Big Business.

It is said that they have too much political power.

Every minority group in the United States has had to face this charge at one time or another. The fact is that the Jewish community does not act as a unit in political matters and never has. Jews, no less than any other group of Americans, are divided in political opinion and party affiliation. The reason the charge is so often made is simple: It is one of the most useful devices of the reactionaries. They seek to discredit political progress by identifying it with the Jews. It is no accident that pro-fascists called the New Deal the "Jew Deal"; that every liberal act introduced in Congress has been labelled a Jewish act by the diehard exploiters; that all legislation to protect the rights of workers has been ascribed to Jewish influence by the open shoppers.

It is said that they shun manual work.

The countless numbers of Jewish workers organized into AFL and CIO unions give the direct lie to this particular

slander. Old World anti-Semitism, by driving the Jews off the land and barring them from numerous crafts, tended to force them into a limited number of commercial pursuits. But that concentration is gradually breaking up here, as noted in a study published in *Survey Graphic* in February, 1939. At that time a quarter of the union carpenters in New York were Jews, a fifth of the electrical workers, nearly half the painters and paper hangers, half the plasterers, almost half the plumbers and steamfitters, more than half the sheet metal workers.

It may be noted in passing that the needle trades unions, formed by Jewish workers, have made a magnificent contribution to the American labor movement. *In two generations, Jewish immigrants from Europe wiped out the sweatshops and established working conditions of which the entire labor movement is proud.* They have been pioneers in labor education, have set the pace in labor cooperation and community responsibility. No unions have so wholeheartedly supported their fellow workers as the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the International Ladies Garment Workers, the United Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers, the International Fur and Leather Workers, and others with a large Jewish membership.

It is said that they care only for their own.

There is no space here to list even a small proportion of the outstanding contributions of Jewish people in science, in art, in social welfare. They have given more than their proportionate share to our armed forces. But to the purveyors of anti-Semitism, and the credulous ones who

listen, facts mean nothing. Of these Lloyd George said:

"In the eyes of these fanatics, the Jews can do no right. If they are rich, they are birds of prey. If they are poor, they are vermin. If they are generous — and there are no more liberal benefactors than the Jews — they are giving for some ulterior motive. If they do not give, then what would one expect of Jews but avarice?"

It is said they are "different," and therefore must be "wicked."

No intelligent person can take seriously the drivel about superior and inferior races. People *do* vary. They vary according to religious beliefs, cultural background, historical development, economic progress. Uniformity exists only in a fascist state; it has no place in a democracy. All races, all religions, all cultures have contributed from their experience to America's cultural treasure.

The anti-Semite insults the intelligence of the American people picturing them as a nation of 135 million imbeciles led by the nose to their doom by 5 million Jews.

A PROGRAM OF ACTION

Now, more than ever, America needs unity.

The war in Europe and Asia has been won, but beyond that, there is the structure of peace to build—a peace that will be permanent, a peace based upon the never-ending movement of the common man toward freedom and plenty.

There is no use blinking the fact that America will face a whole series of economic problems when the war ends. And there is not the slightest doubt that reaction will attempt to exploit postwar tensions to its own advantage.

There will be an attempt to unload the crushing burden of postwar readjustment upon the backs of the workers.

There will be a concerted effort to destroy unions.

The unorganized workers, and the millions of new workers who have joined unions during the war but have not yet become fully integrated in the labor movement, will be held as a club over the head of the unions.

The reactionaries will try to sap the strength of the workers by keeping them busy fighting among themselves. Discrimination will be practised on a wholesale scale (a tactic used in the Philadelphia streetcar strike in 1944).

The working men and women of America can and must forestall disastrous economic dislocation and mass unemployment.

They can and must realize the goal of 60,000,000 jobs in postwar America. They can and will do these things, if all people, irrespective of race, creed or national origin, concentrate on the real tasks ahead. They will fail miserably, if the American labor movement allows its might to be dissipated in racial and religious strife.

If postwar chaos is to be avoided, high purchasing power must be maintained. Economic discrimination against minorities lowers purchasing power. To compare the standard of living in the North with that in the South is to prove that no group of citizens can be held down economically without dragging all other citizens down.

Discrimination — all forms of it, including anti-Semitism — can be fought and beaten. It is only necessary to build up resistance against the germ of the disease. Labor has already played a great part in this job of social sanitation; now it must double and redouble its effort.

The job of fighting discrimination begins with education. Not just some workers, but all workers, must be made to understand the issues involved, the forces at work, the direct link that exists between race or religious prejudice and labor-baiting. Unions which intensify their educational activities and emphasize the study of the problems of minorities will discover that the germ of bigotry shrivels and dies in the sunlight of knowledge.

The educational program should not be negative. Members of various races and religions should be encouraged to get acquainted, to appreciate and understand each other, to take pride in contributions of their own group and to acknowledge contributions of other groups.

But the best educational device of all is the living example. Labor should make sure that it is a living example of harmony and cooperation. It should nip in the bud any discrimination cropping up in its own ranks. The example of the United Auto, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW-CIO), which has set up a special Fair Practices Committee to deal with prejudice among its own members, is a good one. Some unions have included anti-discrimination clauses in their contracts with employers. Others have undertaken energetic counter-action against anti-Semitic propaganda and lie-mongering, teaching their members how to spot the dangerous intent hidden behind supposedly innocent "jokes" which make some religious or racial minority the butt of their heavy-handed humor.

It is important that unions give full support to organizations set up by the minority groups to defend their rights. It would be well for labor to take the lead in

sponsoring such progressive experiments as the Springfield Plan, which tries to develop in the school child an understanding of the composition of modern communities.

Private voluntary effort to combat bigotry is essential, but not enough. In certain areas of activity legislation is necessary. Labor has done well to lead in the fight for a permanent FEPC and for the Ives-Quinn Anti-Discrimination Act, recently passed in New York. Labor should lead in the drive for a law to prohibit dissemination of racial and religious hatred through the mails.

Both AFL and CIO are on record against racial and religious hatred. "Scratch an anti-Semite," said the resolution passed by the CIO at its Seventh Convention in Chicago, "and you find a labor baiter." The AFL, in its Fifty-Eighth Convention in New Orleans at the same time, unanimously passed a resolution which declared:

"Racial and religious discord play into the hands of the enemies of organized labor who are trying to bring about the repeal or emasculatation of the liberal social legislation added to our statute books and to tear down the American standard of living. . . . The same labor baiting forces will find group prejudice directed against Catholics, Negroes, Jews and other minorities an even more effective weapon to use . . . to smash the unions in the postwar period."

It remains now for every international, every local, every chapter and every shop, to breathe life into those brave, true words, to follow and even go beyond the letter and spirit of the resolutions.

If that is done, reaction will be robbed of its greatest weapon, and labor need have no fears for the future.



ONE FINAL WORD

Jews are no better and no worse than other Americans.

There are rich Jews and poor Jews, selfish Jews and generous Jews, brilliant Jews and dull Jews. The vast majority are hard-working, law-abiding, peace-loving people. They want no special favors; they refuse to accept second-class citizenship. They are tired of being the universal scapegoat. The more they are treated as democratic equals, the greater will be their contribution to democracy.

Labor must — for its own sake, and for the sake of the nation and the world — fight for the right of each racial and religious group to contribute the best that is in it to the common good.

The fight against Hitler's race supremacy theories did not end when the Allies captured Berlin. It did not end with V-J Day. It can end only when the people of this Nation and the peoples of the world understand the motivation for this subversive doctrine, and the machinery by which its lies are spread.

As a contribution to that understanding, PAMPHLET PRESS has prepared this pamphlet for the use of organizations and individuals interested in fighting the evils of racism.

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